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Agriculture Magazines and Information Dissemination A study of Government Identified Farmers in Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract: Agriculture and allied sectors continue to be pivotal to the sustainable growth and development of the Indian economy. It's role in alleviating poverty and in ensuring the sustainable development of the economy is well established. The agricultural communication has also proved to be effective in realizing the objectives of improvements in the form of rise in yields, quality products as well as the sustenance of natural resources and others in agriculture. Print media which is a tool of mass media has been contributing to the agriculture enormously. Content of agricultural magazines helped in the raise of knowledge levels with regard to innovations in agriculture. It has been found that progressive farmers who were handpicked to communicate the messages for promotion of agriculture have also evinced more interest to read about stories and features as they are informative and impressive due to visual support.

Keywords: Agriculture, Agriculture Magazines, Agricultural Communication

Introduction

Apart from traditional media print media played an important role in dissemination of information related to the agriculture. In print media as per the history the origin of magazines was also parallel to the newspapers. Print media are extensively used in agricultural technology transfer. In many countries of the world, agricultural technology supplement is published along with daily/weekly newspapers. Technical bulletins and agricultural magazines are often used for the dissemination of agricultural technologies among farmers (SAARC, 2007).

In USA several magazines and newspapers began publications about farming practices soon after the American Revolution. New Jersey's first newspaper, *the New Jersey Gazette*, which began in December 1777, was one of the first colonial era newspapers to encourage articles on farming. In 1785, the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture was organized and was the first agricultural society to publish results of agricultural experimental work. Two of its most notable members were George Washington and Benjamin Franklin (Fletcher, 1976). *The Farmer's Almanac*, which is now titled "*The Old Farmer's Almanac*" was started in 1792. It published tips to improve agricultural practices, weather forecasts, planting charts, tide tables, astronomical information, recipes, and trends in fashion for the benefit of the farmers. *The Old Farmer's Almanac* is the oldest

continuously published periodical in North America. John Stuart Skinner, father of American agricultural journalism started "*The American Farmer*" the first agricultural journal in the United States to attain prominence, running from 1819 to 1897. It provided inputs virtually on every branch of agriculture, allowing his readers to be betterfarmers and livestock producers. He also started several other agriculture-related publications, including "*The American Turf Register* and Sporting Magazine, the Farmer's Library and Monthly Journal of Agriculture, and "*The Plough, The Loom, and The Anvil*. Skinner's periodicals helped spark interest in agriculture during the mid 1800s (Virtualology.com, 2001). However, many other agricultural publications that started in the early 1800s went out of business quickly because making a profit from these early publications proved difficult (Boone et al., 2000).

By the 1840s and 1850s, some scientists of agriculture colleges began writing for agricultural publications (Boone et al., 2000). In some cities, newspapers, such as the Chicago Tribune and The New York Times, employed farm writers. Some magazines such as *Drovers Journal* and *Farm Journal* that were started in the late 1800s are still being published, Nineteenth century witnessed the growth of agricultural magazines and rural weekly newspapers that featured farming news. Between 1880 and 1920, the number of farm magazines and newspapers grew from 157 to 400,

and circulation of agricultural publications also grew, from about 1 million in 1880 to around 17 million by 1920 (Boone et al., 2000). The growth in farm publications also coincided with the expansion of agricultural lands in the West and Midwest, as Americans moved further west. Since then information about various events or news about discoveries, new technologies developed in the universities/research institutions /government or semi government organizations/ private organizations are being published in the farm journals in simple language and style that interests the readers.

The Farmers Weekly is a magazine that has been catering to the British farming industry. It had a net average circulation of 59,328 per issue in 2013. It provides news; business features; a weekly digest of facts and figures about British, European and world agriculture; livestock, arable nature of land, machinery sections with reports and also information related to the technical developments, farm sales and analysis of prices. It was started in 1934 with an aim to increase agricultural production in the UK. In the 1930s, its circulation was over 100,000 copies per issue. *The Farmers Weekly* has also published books such as *Farmhouse Fare* (1935) and *Home Made Country Wines* (1955) with the contributions of the readers of the magazine. Its owners also publish *Crops Magazine*, *Poultry World* and manages the group website, *Farmers Weekly* interactive.

Crop Production Magazine. Started in 1999, CPM (Crop Production Magazine) is now the leading specialist journal for UK arable farmers. It is a controlled circulation magazine and its readership includes farm managers, agronomists, machinery dealers and other arable supply industry professionals. On farm, the magazine is frequently passed on to the farm staff, and read by sprayer operators, tractor drivers, store managers, office staff and other key members of the team. It's also distributed to agricultural universities and colleges, read by students and lecturing staff, as well as to research institutes, read by some of the leading agricultural researchers in their field. Its readers also include farm business owners.

Founded in April 2013, **Modern Farmer** is a quarterly American magazine devoted to agriculture and food. It is unique in its readership as it includes both rural and urban readers equally. It also runs a popular website; its "goatcam", a public web cam of goats, produced 60,000 page views alone.

Farm Journal, the largest national U.S. farm magazine, is a prime source of practical information on crops and livestock for farm families. Published 14 times a year, the magazine emphasizes agricultural production, technology and policy. It has been catering to the farming community for the last 138 years

The **Irish Farmers Journal** is a weekly farming newspaper sold in Ireland. It is the best selling farming newspaper in the country selling to over 247,000 readers per week and circulation of 69,050 (ABC Jan-Jun 2015). It provides the best possible technical support, market information and news to the agricultural sector. The farmers' newspaper financed by Biovision, 'The Organic Farmer' is published monthly and gives concrete practical guidance to farmers on how they can improve their harvests under difficult conditions.

Far Eastern Agriculture has been the region's leading agricultural magazine for more than 30 years. Its ABC-audited circulation guarantees advertisers Asia's highest level of agricultural decision makers. It provides information about emerging market places in Indo-China, the sub-continent and the Russian Far East. Subscribers and qualified readers of the magazine report that an average of 12 other employees will see each issue of the magazine, giving *Far Eastern Agriculture* an unrivaled readership of more than 110,000 readers per issue.

In Kenya and Tanzania magazines like *The Organic Farmer* which is a monthly magazine is sent to farmer groups and *Farmers Voice*, a bi-monthly magazine is brought by Kenya national federation of Agricultural producers. They provide farmers with information on organic farming methods and advice them in implementing simple, sustainable methods.

Review of literature

Lot of research has been taken up about the contributions of agricultural magazines across the globe. Natikar et al. (1995) reported that 98 per cent farmers read newspapers and 65 per cent farm magazines. Radhakrishnan and Ranjan (2001) revealed that newspapers established the edge over the other forms of print media as they are preferred by 86.67% of the respondents, while 11.67% of the respondents preferred magazines. Abideen (2002) revealed that a large majority (71.70%) of the respondents got information about new varieties of wheat and sugarcane from magazines and pamphlets. According to Sohal et al (1977), the *Dairy Samachar* farm magazine readers wanted more information on animal husbandry aspects, milk products, sources of getting seeds and improved breeds of animals, experiences of farmers about dairying and cultivation aspects of field crops including fodder crops. Amjad (2002) found that the delayed delivery, difficult language to understand, old information, unimpressive writing, and high cost were the main factors affecting the effectiveness of magazines. Nataraju and Perumal (1995) reported that the farm magazines viz., 'Krishivigaana' and 'Krishilokes' were moderately effective for majority of their readers. Further, more than two third of the readers evaluated the content of farm magazines in terms of accuracy and relevancy as 'moderately' satisfactory. Nataraju and

Perumal (1995) reported they also found that education, extension participation and attitude towards farm magazines have positive significant relationship with activity of 'Krishivignana' readers. Majunath and Balasubramanya (2002) concluded that the content coverage, format, illustrations and management components are the primary determinants of effectiveness of any magazine. Similarly, extent, purpose and frequency of reading of the magazines by the readers will have positive influence on the circulation.

India

In India, for example, the information needs of the 360 million farmers (expected to rise to 600 million by 2020) who operate under rainfed conditions and contribute 45 percent of production will be different from the needs of farmers in well-endowed irrigated areas (Farrington, Sulaiman, and Pal 1997; Sulaiman and Holt 2002). Due to the sustained efforts of the government as well as private sector ever since the publication of first farm magazine "KrishiSudhar" from Agra in 1914 in Hindi the number of farm magazines increased many fold in Hindi as well as in vernacular languages. Some of the most popular farm magazines in India are "Indian Farmer Digest" (English monthly, 1968), "KisanBharati" (Hindi monthly, 1969), "Kheti" (1948) by ICAR, "Shetkari" (Marathi monthly, 1964) "Basundhara" and "KrishikJagat" (1946) from West Bengal. At present, there are 561 farm magazines in India which constitute a merely 2.04 per cent of total number of periodicals. The aggregate circulation of agricultural publications is only about 8, 86,000 copies i.e., 2.61 per cent of circulation of periodicals (Sadaquith, 2005). Along with newspapers magazines have become powerful

instruments in driving the messages related to the agriculture. While discussing the effectiveness of farm journals Hali (1980) says that "it is often our experience to see that during 'Krishimela' and similar meetings of farmers even the illiterate farmers collect the publications and other literatures and if they find the subject interesting, they would get them read either by their children or by the school teacher, postman or other village functionaries. Thus, the logic behind bringing out agricultural publication is self evident.

The following is the language wise classification of publications at the national level that have been catering to the farmer community with information related to Agriculture and Animal Husbandry.

Table 1
Number of periodicals (language wise) published during 2014-15

S. No	Language	Number
1	Bengali	1
2	Bilingual	5
3	English	17
4	Gujarati	2
5	Hindi	36
6	Malayalam	2
7	Tamil	2
8	Telugu	8
	Total	74

Source: Source: www.rni.nic.in

Table 2
Number of periodicals according periodicity during 2014-15

Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Quarterly	Annual	Others	Total
7	4	46	5	0	12	74

Source: Source: www.rni.nic.in

In India the Telugu states of Andhra Pradesh and Telengana can be considered as the hubs of publication of agricultural magazines. In AP and Telengana regularly eight monthlies of agriculture are getting published in Telugu language.

Table 3
Agriculture Magazines Circulation 2014-2015

S. No	Name of the Magazine	Place of publication	Claimed Circulation
1	Annadata	Hyderabad	298546
2	Agriclinic	Secunderabad	57400
3	VyavasayaPadipantalu	Hyderabad	6425
4	SedyaPhalam	Rangareddi	12359
5	RythuPatham	Hyderabad	50690
6	Rythuvyavasayam	Rangareddi	9800
7	Ritunestham	Hyderabad	2300

Source: Source: www.rni.nic.in

Among the magazines popular in the state of Andhra Pradesh and Telengana *Annadata*, an agricultural monthly is being published in Telugu,

the local language of Andhra Pradesh and Telengana (India) and has completed more than fifty years of its existence. Its circulation of

2,98,546 is mainly in Andhra Pradesh and makes it the largest agricultural magazine in India. The sheer size of its readership establishes it as a potent and demand driven force in agricultural extension. The *VyavasayaPadiPantalu*, Telugu Monthly Magazine is being printed every month by the Department of Agriculture and distributed to farmers, AdarshaRythus (model farmers) etc. Every month the magazine copies are printed and distributed to them. The Magazine comprises 48 pages; in multi colour including a district edition special supplement of 6 pages for 13 districts. The articles covered in the magazine are pertaining to the Agricultural and allied departments like Animal husbandry, Horticulture, Seri Culture, Fisheries, Co-operative and Marketing, Irrigation, A.P Transco, AP Dairy Development Corporation, AP. Seed Development Corporation and A.P. Agros, etc. Department wise latest technical information on various schemes, their aims and objectives, guide lines, subsidy pattern and suggestions to the farmers related to the concerned season / month are also published.

In this context the researchers planned to study the pattern of study of agricultural magazines in India with specific reference to Telugu language. Since they reside and work in Guntur district which is a very enterprising district in the state it was selected for the study. Progressive farmers, farmers who took up agriculture very progressively by implementing innovative, technological procedures and draw large scale profits were identified as sample. Also called as Adarsarythu they were identified to create awareness about agriculture among others. A total of 270 were selected from nine mandals of the district.

Objectives

The study is carried

- To study the reading pattern in the form time spent of the readers of Telugu farm magazines
- To identify preference of readers about Telugu farm magazines
- To study the subscribers preferences for various components of Telugu farm magazines and,

- To know about the place of access of Telugu farm magazines by the progressive Farmers.

A structured questionnaire was designed and administered to the sample. The data was analysed with the help of SPSS package.

Data Analysis

In print media apart from newspapers magazines are also generally read by people to get first hand information. Since many agricultural magazines are available in Telugu farmers prefer to read a wide range of them. Like common men farmers use mass media to access information and try to communicate with others through some of these sources also. Apart from print media i.e. newspapers and magazines farmers have been using mobile phones, TVs, and radios for communication. Abbas (2003) and Kishore (1968) demonstrated that the majority of the farmers own devices like mobile phone, TV and radio that help in receiving and sending information. The findings of Ajaykumar and Veerabhadraiah (1991) reported that a large number of farmers read newspapers. The study of Manjunath and Natikar (2009) and Hanumanaikar (2009) found that a large number of farmers spend up to one hour for reading farm magazines and Laldinliana (2012) observed that the majority of the farmers spend up to one hour in a day on watching TV.

Among the sample 95.9% spend less than one hour in reading newspaper, 4.1% from 1 to 2 hours whereas 67% spend less than one hour on magazines and 33% spend 1 to 2 hours. Among 270 only 162 respondents read pamphlets and other printed material in which majority spend less than one hour on them. Compared to other sources Radio is heard by very few i.e. only by 62 among whom almost all of them spend less than one hour. Television was found to have been patronized by majority where almost all (93.34%) spend 1 to 2 hours watching them, 3.33% watch for less than one hour and 3.33% watch for more than 3 hours. In case of internet 96.8% of the respondents spend less than one hour followed by 3.2% who spend from one to two hours (Table 4).

Table 4

Percentage distribution of the respondents as per the time spent on the mass media per day

S.No	Time spent on mass media per day	n=respondents answered	Less than 1 hr		1 to 2 hrs		More than 3 hrs	
			fr	%	fr	%	fr	%
1	Newspapers	270	259	95.9	11	4.1	-	-
2	Magazines	270	181	67	89	33	-	-
3	Pamphlets/ other printed material	162	161	99.38	1	0.62	-	-
4	Radio	62	61	98.4	1	1.6	-	-
5	TV	270	9	3.33	252	93.34	9	3.33
6	Internet	159	154	96.8	5	3.2	-	-
	Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Here in this study 99.6% read the farm magazine *Padipantalu* published by State government of Andhra Pradesh. Among the sample 90.4% read *Annadata*, *RaituNestham* (13%), *Rythubandu* (5.6%), *SwarnaSedyam* (2.60%), *Agriclinic* (2.20%) (Table 5). These results are closely related to those of Nataraju and Perumal (1996) and Hanumanaikar (2009) who have reported that a majority of the farmers read farm magazines regularly.

Table 5
Percentage distribution of the respondents according to the preference of Agriculture Magazines

S.No	Name of the magazine	fr	%
1	Padipantalu	270	100
2	Anna data	244	90.4
3	SwarnaSedyam	7	2.60
4	Agriclinic	6	2.20
5	Raitunestham	35	13
6	Rythubandu	15	5.6
	Any Other	0	0

N=270

When enquired about the place of access of magazines maximum number of them read them at home (71.9%), followed by library (18.5), neighbors place (8.5%), friends place (0.7%) and panchayati office (0.4%) (Table 6).

Table 6
Percentage distribution of the respondents as per the place of accessing the magazines

S. No.	Place of reading the magazines	fr	%
1	Home	194	71.9
2	Neighbors place	23	8.5
3	Friends place	2	0.7
4	Library	50	18.5
5	Panchayati office	1	0.4
6	Agriculture office	-	-
7	Others	-	-
	Total	270	100

Just like in newspapers magazines also publish information in various formats such as stories, feature etc. But the volume of news would be limited as magazines are published with a periodicity of week, fortnight or a month. In this study 56.3% prefer to read features in magazines followed by stories (36.6%), interviews (4.8%), others (1.9%) and news (0.4%) (Table 7).

Table 7
Percentage distribution of the respondents as per the preference of format to read

S. No.	Preference of format to read	fr	%
1	Stories	99	36.6
2	News	1	0.4
3	Features	152	56.3
4	Interviews	13	4.8
5	Others	5	1.9
	Total	270	100

Conclusions and Suggestions

From the data it is understood that agricultural magazines have also been communicating the farmers significantly.

1. From the study it is known that all the respondents read *Padipantalu*, the magazine published by government. Hence, the government can publish more magazines or reduce its periodicity and publish it as a fortnightly or weekly.

2. Since many of them prefer to read features the magazines can raise their number so that more information can be provided to the farmers in a comprehensive manner.

3. In fact newspapers can also publish features about agriculture as a regular supplement as many of the dailies have been brining supplements on specific subjects regularly.

4. As many of the respondents have been found to prefer stories also their number can be raised. More and more success stories also may be published to motivate and guide the farmers towards the direction of drawing maximum benefits from the farming.

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